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ABSTRACT

A task force was appointed by the California School Boards Association to investigate the increase in violence and vandalism and to recommend courses of action. The task force found four changes in society contributing to the increase: (1) the breakdown of the home and family unit, (2) the lack of self-discipline in children and the absence of responsible adult control, (3) the impact of violence on television, and (4) disrespect for the law and lack of effective legal penalties and strict enforcement. This document lists actions that can be taken in each of these areas and identifies successful programs around California sponsored by groups willing to share their ideas with others. The questionnaire sent to school board members and citizens in seven California counties to identify areas of concern and possible remedial action is included as an appendix. (Author/PGD)

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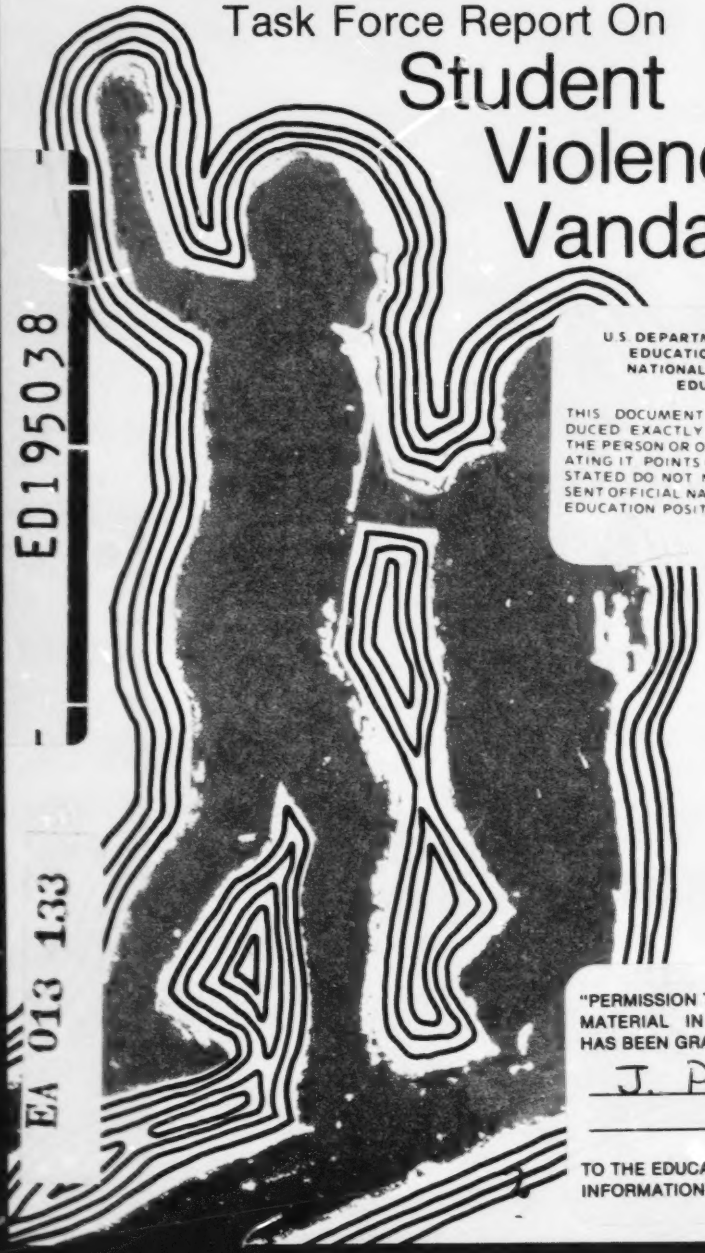
California School Boards Association • September 1980

Task Force Report On Student Violence & Vandalism



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Foreword

There seems to be a notion that violence and vandalism are like the weather: Everyone talks about them, but no one does anything about them.

True, there are programs aimed at reducing violent acts, but there is as yet no concerted effort to solve the problem of violent destruction which plagues our schools, our society and our world.

This report is the result of a survey throughout the State of California, a survey that tapped the minds and energies of not only school officials, but the clergy, police, counselors, probation officers, social workers, the business community, students, parents, and interested citizens, to discover creative recommendations which address the challenge of reducing violence and vandalism. The task force members wanted to find out if there was a "fresh" way, a "what if" way that had not yet been tried or was working in a small corner of the state.

We generated an exceptionally high percentage of responses to our questions. From these answers and our own brainstorming sessions we produced this report.

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Chapter 1.
Change & Conflict

Violence and vandalism are epidemic in our society, and many of our students, as emerging members of society, have caught the disease. Efforts to stamp out this epidemic have emerged in urban and rural school districts but no panacea has yet been identified. When board members from throughout the state asked CSBA to address this serious problem, this task force was appointed to diagnose the problem and recommend some strong medicine.

The task force identified four changes in society that contribute to the increase in violence:

1. The breakdown of the home and family unit.
2. The lack of self-discipline in children as well as the absence of control over their behavior by responsible adults.
3. The growing power of television to influence viewers toward imitating violent behavior.
4. Disrespect for the law and lack of effective legal penalties and strict enforcement.

Breakdown of Family

Throughout the responses from the survey were pleas for assistance in planning and presenting classes on parenting, not only for students, but for parents needing help in coping with raising children.

The years since World War II have seen dramatic changes in the American family structure. No longer can we define the family as including a father, a mother and one or more children. Today, quite often the family consists of a single parent, either male or female, and one or more children. A grandparent, a relative, or even an older sibling may be the major authority figure in the family unit today. Therefore, throughout this task force report, the word "family" refers to various kinds of units which, by their very nature of providing for the physical and emotional welfare of children, constitute a family unit. As more and more women enter the labor force and as more and more men and women travel from job to job, the former stable family unit has disintegrated. The prevalence of divorce and loosened moral standards have escalated the conflicts in values and expectations between children and parents and grandparents. The educator may find, in dealing with the family, that it is a constantly changing unit in which there may be little or no participation in the child's progress in school. The school may, indeed, have become the foster parent!

In response to these societal changes, a trend is developing to hold the schools responsible for total care of the total child. We oppose this trend. The best approaches we have found to reducing violence and vandalism involve parents, community and schools working together as partners in the educational endeavor.

Lack of Discipline

If we have learned anything over the years it is that it is almost impossible to *impose* standards. All groups that are going to be affected by the standards must "buy into them." Discipline and control policies should be developed and implemented by school personnel, parents, and students working together. Communications should not be left to chance. Discipline policy must give firm and positive direction. Local school rules and regulations must identify standards of behavior that are clear, concise and easily understood by parents, teachers and students. The ultimate goal should be to train students to have self-direction and self-control.

Power of TV

Our task force members are disturbed by the enormous number of hours the average child spends watching television. Television is a thief of time. It robs young people of time which could be devoted to family, school and community activities. Evidence shows that high exposure to TV violence encourages violent behavior in some young viewers. Television has changed our world permanently and nothing we say in this report will alter that fact. We should admit that television is a business, not a moral endeavor. Our concern is that we treat this medium with more respect and use it positively as a weapon against violence. We can have an impact on program quality, not only in eliminating highly violent programs, but in pushing for entertaining shows that aim to reduce violence and vandalism through education.

Loss of Respect for Law

Crime does pay for a growing portion of our society's young people. Even when apprehended, youthful offenders have been able to escape the punishment appropriate to their crime. Crime pays when society cannot respond because of crowded court calendars, overloaded juvenile facilities, and inconsistent penalties. In one example, a child set fire to the school's learning resource center. He was counseled, reprimanded, and yet continued to commit serious offenses, finally committing murder.

A number of law officials responding to the survey commented that drastic change is needed in our treatment of youthful law-breakers. Many innocent people are victims of this violence by youngsters who could have been helped by early identification and remediation.

Leadership and cooperation are needed. We must all understand that with rights come responsibilities. Parents must be held liable for the cost of damage caused by their children; students must be offered relevant curricula; teachers must be able to respond appro-

priately to acts of vandalism and violence with confidence that they will be supported by their school administrators and boards of education. Schools by themselves cannot prevent crime and violence: Active involvement of school personnel, law enforcement officials, parents, students and members of the total community is essential to this effort.

"Stop 'pussyfooting' around with juveniles who fail to recognize the rights of others!"

Chapter 2.
Responding To Change

The task force took the four major themes identified by the survey respondents as major contributors to violence and vandalism (Chapter 1), and prepared a list of "how-to-make changes."

Not all of these ideas will prove valuable to you, but some may help you to reduce acts of violence and vandalism in your own district. We submit them to you, hoping that the mental and physical welfare of us all will be significantly upgraded through the reduction of the violence and vandalism around us. (Successful operating programs are cited in Chapter 3.)

1.
BREAKDOWN OF THE FAMILY

1. Offer positive parenting classes.
2. Establish a graduation requirement that a student take a course which includes a unit in parenting.
3. Encourage student volunteers to work in orphanages, foster homes, hospitals and other programs involving abandoned and abused children. Offer school credit for satisfactory work performed.
4. Obtain reports from Sacramento Statehouse Conference on Youth, Spring, 1980 and implement.[1]
5. Obtain reports from the White House Conference on the Family, Summer 1980 and implement.[2]
6. Establish a local task force of school board members, clergy, parents, law enforcement officials and others to search out ways that schools can be a catalyst for strengthening the family.
7. Spotlight families in the community who exemplify family values and standards. Base this selection on criteria similar to Student of the Month.
8. Meet with the instructors of childbirth classes and request opportunities to disseminate information on good parenting.
9. Encourage manufacturers of baby products to provide materials or sponsor seminars on family living and child-raising. (This is not intended to promote specific products.)
10. Use high school civic classes to study
    - Family finances.
    - Family relationships.
    - Cost of family break-up.
    - Impact of broken families on society.

2.
LACK OF CONTROL ON PART OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS

1. Develop a course of study in behavior and citizenship encompassing all grade levels within the school district. Teachers, parents, students, and members of the community-at-large

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[1] *Report on Statehouse Conference on Children and Youth.* Request from Department of Youth Authority, P&CC Branch, Room 219, 4241 Williamsborough Drive, Sacramento 95823. Attn: Willie Sloan (No charge.)

[2] For a copy of this report, write Mr. James Tucker, Chairman, Whitehouse Conference on the Family, 330 Independent Ave, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201.

should be represented in the development of this course.

2. Develop a district discipline policy that gives direction to the schools reflecting values and standards of the community. Further assist each school to develop within this policy rules that are clear and concise.
3. Develop and distribute a well-defined plan of response to misconduct. Both students and teachers must know what kind of reaction will result.
4. Develop a planned, on-going communication system between the home and the school and between the teacher, child and parent.
5. Develop an in-service education program for both teachers and parents in the most current techniques dealing with positive discipline.
6. Develop a town hall meeting, where people from all facets of the community air ideas on what they can do to reduce violence and vandalism.
7. Establish a reward system for those schools and those students that display respect for and observance of school and community rules.
8. Encourage students to develop questions about areas of the law that might be troubling them. Invite law enforcement agents into the classrooms to answer questions and discuss the law.
9. Join us in making a major effort to encourage the mass media to develop positive entertainment programming to reduce violence and vandalism.
10. Encourage school district administrators to work with community media to highlight local problems.
11. Encourage students to monitor behavior of peers in a positive manner including the use of student courts.
12. Require the staff to exemplify behavior expected of the students.

3.

VIOLENCE ON TELEVISION

1. Join in efforts of local, state and national groups who are working to reduce television violence.
2. Develop parental in-service workshops in which excerpts from television programs are shown, and followed by discussion between parents, teachers and community representatives.
3. Encourage reducing or eliminating violent television programs during the hours when children are most likely to watch.
4. Appeal to all the major advertisers in the nation, through

letters, phone calls, personal contacts, and product boycott, not to sponsor programs depicting violence.
5. Write to the FCC asking for further research to determine the relation of criminal behavior to violent behavior seen on television.
6. Establish a speakers' bureau to focus on the subject of television violence.
7. Encourage religious organizations to address television violence.
8. Initiate a mass campaign through schools and media to limit television watching.
9. Watch television with your child. The only way to be sure of what your children are watching and what their attitude it towards it is to watch with them.

4.
DISRESPECT FOR THE LAW AND SOCIETY

1. Write your state legislator urging the establishment of a task force which would review the entire judicial system in California and make recommendations for improvements.
2. Develop a program for the on-going involvement of law enforcement officials with students. Such programs could include formal and informal classroom instruction, informal rap sessions, or regular assignment of an officer to a school (SRO).
3. Release information through the media on successful methods your district is using to reduce violence and vandalism.
4. Make a place on the school board agenda for local law enforcement personnel to speak on ways to reduce violence and vandalism. Dialogue would include all in attendance.
5. Develop a ride-along program where students ride in police cars on a regular basis to witness activities of a law enforcement officer.
6. Encourage student art and essay contests to address the problem of violence and vandalism.
7. Have students develop displays to relate the cost of specific acts of vandalism to positive activities that the money could otherwise buy.
8. Work with counties, probation departments, courts, cities, and law enforcement agencies to address the problems of violence and vandalism.
9. Establish an on-going relationship with the probation department.

Chapter 3.
A Guide To Successful Programs

The task force identified five major ingredients which are a part of successful program planning. Of course, any plan to control violence and vandalism must be tailored to the local school district and its problems. However, we think all programs will contain most, if not all, of the following elements:

1. *Understanding.* Any code of conduct or other rules devised must state clearly and simply the rules necessary for a smooth and non-violent atmosphere. School officials must be creative in finding ways of making students, parents and teachers understand and feel ownership of these rules.
2. *Involvement.* There are not enough resources in any district to continually observe student behavior and patrol student property. The goal of any education system is to develop self-discipline within its students. We have seen many creative ways of encouraging this behavior, but they all involve giving students their own leadership skills so that they become partners in the effort. Student involvement should extend beyond administration-recognized student leaders to include other influential students who may or may not have a positive attitude prior to participating in such a program.
3. *Community Participation.* Schools have rarely used the human resources available in the community. Police, social service organizations and correctional agencies are resources which could be used in helping to resolve problems of violence and vandalism. In addition, students can gain valuable insights through being exposed to responsible adults and their occupations.
4. *Incentives.* Instead of being oriented toward rules and penalties, many successful programs offer rewards of money or special programs directed to the student for exemplary activity and/or to the local school for reducing the cost and incidence of violence and vandalism. Incentives might be paid only when there is a savings to the district.
5. *Time.* All programs take additional time on the part of teachers or administrators. It is vital for the success of such programs to allow time for such activities. This can be done by bringing in teachers prior to the start of school, occasionally releasing classes early, and cancelling faculty or administrative meetings to make time for these activities.

Those of us associated with schools often feel overwhelmed by the vastness of the problem and lack of money with which to deal with it effectively. However, schools are not the only agencies trying to effect cures for violence and vandalism: All communities are rich in

resources; what is needed is leadership to bring these resources together.

Successful programs using community resources already exist. Operation Stay-in-School in Fresno, Project RAISE in Escondido, Project Revive in Los Angeles County, Cambrian Parents Alert and Project Phoenix in San Diego County are examples. When a full network of idea-sharing is developed, then there will be no need for "reinventing the wheel."

The task force contacted communities and school districts with successful programs to determine if they would be willing to share their ideas and programs with others throughout the state. Those listed below agreed to such sharing:

PROGRAM	DISTRICT	CONTACT PERSON
1. Parents Alert	Cambrian Elementary School District 4115 Jacksol Drive San Jose, CA 95124	Philip Barone, Supt. 408 377-2103
2. Project Raise	Escondido Union Elementary School District 980 N. Ash Street Escondido, CA 92027	Don Hout, Supt. 714 745-7000
3. Operation Stay-In-School	Fresno Unified School District Tulare and M Streets Fresno, CA 93721	Glenn Rathwick, Ass't. Supt. 209 441-3522
4. Yerba Buena Plan: The Crisis Counselor — A School-based Interagency Team Approach	Yerba Buena High School 1855 Lucretia Avenue San Jose, CA 95122	Gerald Mullins 408 279-1500
5. Project Revive	Los Angeles Co. Office of Education 9300 E. Imperial Hwy. Downey, CA 90242	Thomas W. Butterworth Consultant
6. Project Phoenix	Grossmont Union High School P.O. Box 1043 La Mesa, CA 92041	Bob James 714 442-5409

7.	Peer Counseling	Los Angeles City Unified P.O. Box 3307 Terminal Annex Los Angeles, CA 90051	William Johnston, Supt. 213 625-6000
8.	Incentive Program	Oakland Unified School District 1025 Second Avenue Oakland, CA 94606	Ruth Love, Supt. 415 836-8200
9.	Work Adjustment Program	Culver City Unified School District 4034 Irving Place Culver City, CA 90230	Gene Broadwater 213 839-4361
10.	Open Road Stride	San Francisco Unified School District 135 Van Ness Avenue San Francisco, CA 94102	Robert Alioto, Supt. 415 565-9000
11.	Project SARB	Yuba Co. Office of Education 938 14th Street Marysville, CA 95901	Laurie Desmond 916 674-6231
12.	Guidelines for Student Discipline & Code of Conduct	Fresno Co. Office of Education 2314 Mariposa Street Fresno, CA 93721	Gordon D. Lemky 209 488-3323
13.	School Resource Office	Riverside Unified School District 3380 14th Street Riverside, CA 92501	Clark L. Cox, Supt. 714 788-7130
14.	Crime Prevention Center, Department of Justice	Office of the Attorney General 555 Capitol Mall, Suite 290 Sacramento, CA 95814	Glen C. Scrimger Education Specialist
15.	Checkmates	National Council of Negro Women 341 W. 2nd Street, No. 6 San Bernardino, CA 92410	Ms. Wilma Carter

"Destruction occurs from boredom."

Chapter 4.
Quotable Quotes

Those responding to the 12 questions in the survey (see appendix) often made interesting comments. The quotes below are lifted directly from these responses:

Question No.	Quote
1.	Keep the fences in good repair.
1.	Eliminate the need for fortress-like campuses.
2.	Americans are violent. From infancy, parents encourage children to fight.
2.	Students have to be respected if they are expected to respect others.
2.	Violence is not a problem in our district!
3.	Don't use authority, we already have it!
3.	Put teeth in laws.
4.	It is a community problem — not the school's.
4.	Give the district some enforcement "muscle."
5.	The very heaviest problem we've had is a boy dipping snuff during lunch hour.
5.	Educate on the evils of life.
6.	Vandals get off too easy.
6.	You do it — you pay for it.
7.	Legislative bodies are continually grinding out new and ill-advised education bills that usually are unproductive and idiotic.
7.	Schools are too political.
8.	Use expulsion.
8.	Stop "pussyfooting" around with juveniles who fail to recognize the rights of others!
9.	Some people seem to tolerate violence by people who have been "wronged" in some way.
9.	Not enough concern for the victim.
10.	Children need to grow into being adults and not have it thrust upon them before they are ready.
10.	If children commit adult crimes, they should pay adult penalties.
11.	Children receive less preschool education from their parents when the TV set becomes the babysitter.
11.	Destruction occurs from boredom.

"Eliminate the need for fortress-like campuses."

Appendix
Task Force Questionnaire

In order to ensure an approximate sampling of 10% of the districts in the state, fifteen board members within each of the seven representative counties (Fresno, Humboldt, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Santa Clara) who represent small, medium, and large districts were sent questionnaires. An additional 20 questionnaires were sent to students, teachers, administrators, parents, clergy and other individuals from law enforcement agencies in the same districts. A high percentage of questionnaires was returned. Following is a copy of the cover letter and questionnaire.

September 21, 1979

Dear Friend.

Enclosed is a list of tough questions which we as members of the California School Boards Association's Violence/Vandalism Task Force will have to address as we deal with the problems of violence and vandalism in our schools and communities.

The CSBA Violence/Vandalism Task Force is one of several task forces that has been identified by school board members throughout this state in order to respond to the current issues in public education. One of the charges to our task force is to identify critical areas of concern, causes and preventative measures that are being developed and implemented in local school districts as they relate to violence and vandalism on a statewide basis. We are asking local board members who represent small, medium and large school districts to respond to this questionnaire as well as students, parents, teachers, administrators, clergy and law enforcement officials from rural, suburban and urban communities.

The task force is looking for creative ideas and programmatic solutions! Please answer the questions in areas where you have tried something different or have wanted to develop something innovative and leave the other questions blank if they are not applicable. We have tried as much as possible to put the dilemmas we face in proper perspective in these questions. If any question (or assumption on which the question is based) gets in the way, please write your own question and answer to it.

The CSBA Violence/Vandalism Task Force appreciates your assistance and interest in its efforts. Please enclose any materials which you feel would be helpful to us. Also indicate by checking the appropriate box on the final page if you are interested in receiving the results of this survey. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to write or call. We would like the questionnaire returned no later than Monday, October 22, 1979. Thank you.
(Members names and addresses listed.)

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1. While there is a considerable amount of concern about discipline in schools, we know there are programs, strategies and various approaches that are working which have reduced the problems.
   a) What program ingredients, approaches or specific techniques can you identify that have contributed to effectively reducing discipline problems in your school district or community?

b) What programs are your local school board and staff considering for future implementation that have promise in the reduction of discipline problems?

2. What are some effective strategies, techniques or programs that your school district or community have developed which make campuses more secure against vandalism before, during and after school hours?
3. What are some successful programs that your local school board and staff have developed with the assistance and cooperation of other members of your community to help prevent violence and vandalism?
4. a) What examples do you have of effective interagency cooperation between local school boards and staff and other community agencies?
   b) What approaches are most effective in your community in reducing endless meetings and additional layers of bureaucracy?
5. a) What should be included in a student code of conduct?
   b) In order for such a code to be effective, what strategies or techniques can a local school board and staff utilize in order that the code is fully understood and followed?
6. School districts working under current constraints regarding expulsion have developed a number of alternative approaches.
   a) What alternative approaches are the most effective in your school district and community?
   b) Do you feel that expulsion is a viable way of dealing with violence and vandalism?
7. a) In your opinion does the control of access to and exit from school campuses by students or non-students help to reduce the problems of violence and vandalism?
   b) If so, what is the best way to accomplish this control?
   c) If not, what alternatives do you suggest?
8. What are some examples of realistic policies which have been developed by local school boards on violence and vandalism that work at the site level?
9. a) What approaches have been most effective in your school district and community to reduce truancy and tardiness?
   b) What plans does your district have for the future that might be promising practices for the reduction of truancy and tardiness?

10. What preventative programs, approaches or techniques have been developed in your local school district or community which have successfully dealt with weapons, drugs and/or alcohol on campus?
11. What legislative changes would help local school boards develop effective and positive policies dealing with violence and vandalism?
12. The CSBA Violence/Vandalism Task Force recognizes that it is impossible to discuss violence and vandalism without discussing causes.
    a) Which of the many potential causes do you feel are most prevalent and important in your local school district and community?
    b) What other innovative ideas might be implemented to deal with the causes and preventative measures as they relate to violence and vandalism? (Please do not limit your response to this question because of possible legal or monetary restraints!)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____

TELEPHONE _____

Please check group you represent:

- ☐ Local school board member
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Parent
- ☐ Administrator
- ☐ Clergy
- ☐ Law Enforcement Agency
- ☐ Other - Explain

_____

_____

☐ I am interested in receiving a copy of the results of this questionnaire